

our country. We as a Nation, and particularly here in Congress, have a sobering choice to make: We can either continue to bury our heads in the sand and hide behind our tough-on-crime rhetoric and placing the sole blame on things like violent music and video games, or we can be proactive so that we can start seeing real reduction in crime. There are options available to us that are more cost-effective and life-saving than throwing increased resources into cameras and metal detectors and security guards and prisons.

Let it not be misconstrued that I believe that these are not important factors in our society. We certainly have to segregate violent criminals from the society. However, if we continue to unwisely spend an overwhelming amount of our constrained resources on this, we will continue to lose on the war on crime.

According to CNN, cost analyses show that for every dollar spent on youth violence prevention, \$14 is saved on what would have otherwise been spent in the criminal justice system. And so many times an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

As a matter of fact, as earlier mentioned, the disparity between crack cocaine and powdered cocaine led the sentencing commission once again to say this is discriminatory, it is absolutely wrong to have a 5-year minimum sentence, mandatory, for crack cocaine. But for the same amount, or even 10 times more, and I believe it even goes up to 100 times more for powder cocaine, you can have a suspended sentence. That is absolutely wrong. I am glad that the sentencing commission and the judiciary now are saying we should change this.

Also, I am proud to say in New Jersey, just this past week, for the first State in the Union to ban by legislative action the death penalty in the State senate, and today that is being considered in the assembly, is I think really a just way for our State to move. So let me say that I commend Congressman LARSON.

□ 1515

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCOTT of Virginia addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### APPOINTMENT OF HON. STENY H. HOYER TO ACT AS SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE TO SIGN ENROLLED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS THROUGH DECEMBER 17, 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,  
December 13, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STENY H. HOYER to act as Speaker pro tempore to sign

enrolled bills and joint resolutions through December 17, 2007.

NANCY PELOSI,  
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the appointment is approved.

There was no objection.

#### MENTAL HEALTH PARITY NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, this evening I have an opportunity to address an issue that our country has long seen unaddressed in the many years that we have tackled many issues but failed to address the underlying issue that we seek to talk about this evening. We have just heard many people talk about the issue of gun violence. We have had many people talk about drug smuggling. Well, these are just two examples of the issue that we are going to talk about tonight, in the examples that point to the fact that we are failing to address the underlying problem.

The issue of gun violence, we fail to address the underlying problems of violence in our society when we fail to address the underpinnings of violence. What is it that created the mind of that young man in Omaha that led him to act out in such a way that led to the death so tragically of those innocent people in the mall in Omaha, Nebraska? Why was it that he could not get the help that he needed such that he had to act out in such a way? Why was it that he had to resort to violence?

Why is it in this country that homicide amongst young people is the second leading cause of death for young people? Why is it that suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people 15 to 24?

It is important to ask these questions because if we do, we start to dig below the surface of these questions about whether the issue is really about simply the question of whether we are talking about locking people up or addressing a more fundamental problem and that is addressing people's needs in this country which aren't going to be addressed simply by locking them up, but rather by, as was just addressed by Mr. PAYNE from New Jersey, addressing these problems before they become problems.

What we are here tonight to talk about is addressing people's emotional and mental health needs in this country so that as a Nation we don't have our criminal justice system become the mental health system that it has become in our society.

We as a country incarcerate more people in this country of ours than any other free country on the face of the Earth. We imprison more people in this

country than any other free country on the Earth. It begs the question, why is it that America, which calls itself the land of the free, why do we jail so many people? We jail so many people because we fail to get ourselves prepared to come to grips with the violence in our society. We jail so many people in this country because we fail to come to grips with the drug epidemic in our society.

You just heard Mr. POE from Texas talk about Border Patrol and the fact that these border agents are being held in jail because of drug smuggling charges and the problems that they have in interdicting drug smugglers. We heard from Ms. JACKSON-LEE about the problem of charging criminals, the disparity in sentencing between crack cocaine and powder cocaine and how disparate the charges are.

We are talking around the issue. We are talking around the issue. The issue is: What are we doing as a Nation to address this as a health problem that it is? Why in the world would people choose to keep using drugs if they know it is going to end up putting them in jail? Why would people continue to use drugs when they know it is going to cause them to either die or lose their families or lose their lives? But that is what it does to millions of Americans every year, and yet people continue to go on using.

Why do they go on using? Because this is an addiction. Because this is a physical disease, because this is a compulsion of the mind, of the body of the soul. And unless our country comes to grips with treating this disease for what it is, and that is a physical illness, like every other physical illness, then we as a society will not begin to address all of the other problems that we hear our colleagues come to the floor this evening to talk about.

We will fail to address the criminal justice problems. We will fail to find a way to deal with the incarceration problems. We will fail to find a way to deal with the drug smuggling problems. We will fail to find a way to deal with the violence problems if we don't first find a way to address the fundamental problem of treating people's physical illness which drives them to use drugs and alcohol which forces them into these situations which create the underpinnings of violence that create these problems in the first place.

Now many people say, Well, when people use drugs, that is their choice. It is a moral failing on the person's part if they get addicted. We know better now. We have done scans of the brain and we have done research and we have shown that a brain is an organ of the body, like every other organ of the body. And in fact just like somebody may have diabetes and if they get low sugar and they eat candy bars in order to get that sugar up, for many people who have depression, they use drugs to get their serotonin levels up, to get their neuroepinephrine up, to get their chemicals up in their brain